

## SPACES OF RESILIENCE: IRPINIA 1980, ABRUZZO 2009

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### Introduction

The disasters are *processes* (social, organisational and technical) rather than sudden events. Some issues are by now crucial in the analytical frame of disasters sociology: identifying the factors determining their latency; grasping the crucial role of information, obeying rules by management, stakeholders' *familiarity* with the places where the crisis occurs; investigating dynamics causing the failure of forecasts (Turner, Pidgeon, 1997). But how can we study disasters? The debate on methodologies and "critical" variables has not generated a shared analytical paradigm. Nevertheless, some fundamental points seem to emerge. On a methodological level, the productivity of *case-studies* with a wide space/time coverage is by now a fact. The long-term perspective and the situated analysis of the effects of catastrophes, on people's lives and on the society as a whole, turn into a useful methodology to read processes of change (Duyne-Barenstein, Lee-mann, 2013), to break up established thinking patterns, to re-conceptualise non-linear processes. In this perspective some studies examine people's immediate responses to earthquakes in different cities. These studies revealed the centrality of the physical, household and social *setting* in which people are located at the moment of the seismic shock to understand the different emotional responses to earthquakes (Lindell *et al.*, 2015). The analytical productivity of *case-studies* has also fostered the recovery of a territorial perspective in disaster studies; the themes of space, unfolded in its conceptual ranges (environment, territory, place, local), are more and more used by scholars. In general, the territorial approach can offer sophisticated and effective analytical criteria to approach concrete phenomena (Osti, 2010). Within this perspective, the choice of the local territory as an interesting field of analysis is proving to be promising. It allows to focus attention on local actors and the complex network of relations between them and with "external" actors. This perspective does not ignore the features of the local socio-economic context (Ercole, 2014). All the above

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matches the idea, widely shared by scientists, that disasters are not to be considered as a result of extreme geophysical events, but as a consequence of the co-evolutive process connecting social system and environment (Davico, Mela, Staricco, 2009), and of historical and structural processes (Bankoff, 2003). More recently, Saitta (2015) has noted that areas affected by the disaster are very interesting “ethno-methodological” situations for the qualitative researchers. “Entering” the place and time of the disaster allows us to capture the multidimensionality of experience: individual and collective, private and public. Last but not least, the centrality of the space/time categories in the territorial perspective opens the way to memories and oral histories as precious sources to reconstruct events, experiences, practices, meanings and representations connected to them. It also opens the way to the Social Network Analysis approach (Norris *et al.*, 2008) aimed at investigating the networks developing in a crisis scenario. Both of these approaches are particularly useful to grasp dynamics that embedded spaces and times socially defined.

On an analytical/conceptual level, scholars’ analysis starts from the need to integrate environmental and social variables. *Risk*, *vulnerability* and *resilience*, connected to *sustainability*, are the concepts which fulfil this need, especially if considered in their reciprocal interaction. While the concept of vulnerability gives the sense of a society not well equipped to face risk<sup>1</sup>, resilience «gives more importance to the inner resources of a local society (or wider) and to its capability of self-transformation in response to the impact of a negative event» (Mela, 2014: 240). This represents a more productive interpretation in terms of prevention/control of the risk (Mela, 2014) and, more generally, in a perspective of sustainable development (Folke, 2006). The fortunate rising of this concept in different fields, even very distant from materials science where it originates<sup>2</sup>, has produced a wide range of definitions; its operationalization have become more and more articulated (Landi, 2012; Mela, 2014). Nevertheless we could identify some concepts shared by many scholars. First of all, resilience should be seen as an “ability” rather than a “property” of a system, as an elastic skill to recover after an external shock, to absorb an unexpected change of state (Folke, 2006). This ability should be intended as collective rather than in-

<sup>1</sup> Vulnerability refers to the «characteristics of a person or group in terms of their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a natural hazard» (Blaikie *et al.*, 1994: 9).

<sup>2</sup> In this field, resilience is intended as the physical property of a material that can return to its original shape or position after deformation that does not exceed its elastic limit (Cimellaro, Reinhorn, 2011).

dividual. Secondly, the “structural” and “dynamic” dimensions of resilience should be considered in mutual interaction, but without confusing them (Mela, 2010). The first one refers to the features of the social system and of the natural and built environment as well as the relation between the two systems. This is the dimension more directly interwoven with the concept of vulnerability of a community. Dynamic resilience refers to the adaptive evolution of communities facing a catastrophe, the network taking shape between the local system and the various external levels, and to the capability of fostering social cohesion and negotiate resources (Ungar, 2008). Furthermore, resilience should be seen as a process, in terms of a situational and dynamic concept. As Norris (2008) highlighted, resilience is not an immutable condition but rather a set of adaptive capacities to be continuously attended to and modified to prevent their loss: it must be recognised, fed, nurtured. In this perspective, the space/time dimension of the processes, in which resilience takes shape, becomes crucial to understand its performance.

What we have presented so far constitutes the analytical framework underlining our study about two violent disasters happened in Italy: the earthquake of 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1980 and that of 6<sup>th</sup> April 2009. The first one destroyed a wide area between Campania, Apulia and Basilicata; the second one hit the city of L’Aquila and some surrounding municipalities in Abruzzo. Our contribution will focus on the periods immediately after the earthquakes to propose an interpretation of the social dynamics taking place in the areas of the craters, which suffered the heaviest damages. The main analytical category will be resilience, in its situational and dynamic dimension. Our study will be carried out on two main levels, deeply interconnected but kept separate here for the sake of analysis: the institutions’ level and the inhabitants’ level. The first one refers to the Mayors in charge at the time of the event, whose role had deep implications in the various stages of the disaster (from risk to rebuilding), and in the re-settling and re-organisation of the socio-territorial spaces. The second level refers to the people living in the areas hit by the earthquake, their personal experiences and individual representation of the catastrophe, their relation with public and private spaces. The capability of local societies to create organised forms of interaction (such as committees, cooperatives, etc.) and of collective activism will be investigated too. These can be considered as resources for *community* resilience (Norris *et al.*, 2008). We will mainly embrace the actors’ point of view, reconstructed through the individual and collective memory of the events.

## 1. Earthquakes

Earthquakes are, by nature, processes. They have a long history which periodically explodes in disastrous events. Though not predictable, they are at times announced. They upset the socio-environmental contexts, draw a deep brake in personal biographies and social histories. Nonetheless, they can generate changes that stimulate local cultures to develop adaptation strategies, mitigation tools, networks of structural and social protection. Italy is a country with a long seismic history, of which memory is often lost (Gribaudo, 2015). The lack of historical reconstructions and a transitional, even if substantial, corpus of laws (Guidoboni, 2015) contributed to inhibit resilience of territories and their institutions. As a consequence, the vulnerability between earthquakes increase. An adverse mechanism which seems to always deny the past. Referring to the earthquake which destroyed Messina in 1908, Parrinello (2015) highlighted that: « (...) While issues such as the port renewal and peri-urban reforestation expanded the urban reform debate, minor earthquakes struck the city in 1895, 1905 and 1907. Surprisingly, those earthquakes did not provoke any response by authorities, despite the persistent memory of past disasters. The lack of effective measures after those earthquakes contributed largely to the extent of destruction in 1908» (Parrinello, 2015: 11). After 1915 earthquake in the Abruzzo area of Marsica: «The decision to rebuild Avezzano according to a new urban plan which does not respect its old urban structure has been determined (...) by the absence of a historical memory, by a voluntary cut with the past»; a decision which brought to the progressive emptying of the new “garden city” (Ciranna, Montuori, 2015: 24). The earthquake of 6<sup>th</sup> April 2009 in L’Aquila had been preceded by more than six months of tremors: « (...) on a historical point of view, the analysis of the major earthquake crisis of L’Aquila and Abruzzo defined nearly a seismic style (...) with major shakes preceded by weeks or months of tremors not lower than magnitude 3» (Guidoboni, 2015: 769). These dynamics recall processes of “perceptual rigidity” (for example “phishing phenomena”, that is wrong interpretations of the alarm signals) which contribute to feed incubation of disaster and crisis (Turner, Pidgeon, 1997) and to inhibit resilient behaviours on various levels. More recently, the interest of social sciences towards earthquake in a diachronic perspective, revealed its explanatory potential for the understanding of the processes of social change. In particular, in the Italian history of earthquakes a model of institutional and social response systematically come up. First, early the discomfort then the strength of survivors after the shock, digging in the ruins and managing the

emergency. Secondly, the shift in the collective representation between the poverty and underdevelopment (before the earthquake) and the new modern wealth (after the earthquake). Finally, the acceleration of modernisation processes, already started/envisaged “before”, on a wider and more ambitious level (repositioning of entire historical centres or oversized infrastructure building), which generate stories of distorted modernization (Parrinello, 2015; Zaccaria, 2015). One can find here and there in these mechanisms traces of resilience, whose effectiveness can be measured by the time and spaces allowed to it.

## 2. Irpinia 1980 - Abruzzo 2009

On 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1980, at 7.30 pm of an hot Autumn Sunday, a violent earthquake burst 30 Km underground between Sella di Conza in Campania (AV), Castelnuovo di Conza and Laviano (SA)<sup>3</sup>. Until today the number of victims remains an approximate estimate of about 3.000 casualties. The main shake was estimated 6,9 Richter scale degrees, its intensity reached 10 degrees (totally destructive) of the Mercalli scale in the municipalities within the “crater”: over 15.000 sq. Km between Campania, Apulia and Basilicata. A huge area with different socio-economic backgrounds (Zaccaria, 2008; Ventura, 2010): rural contexts marked by precarious living and housing conditions, some characterised by tertiarization and infrastructure investments, others experimenting new industrialization policies using public funds (i.e. *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*). In the twenty years from 1961 to 1981, the demographic trend of the whole area was marked by heavy emigration. According to National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology data, the disaster hit 687 municipalities, 37 of which were totally destroyed; 60% of productive activities were seriously compromised. The homes destroyed or damaged were more than 300.000. These data reveal the vulnerability of the area hit by the earthquake. They tell us about the carelessness of the first technical norms approved after the earthquake in Messina of 1908; the building explosion of the sixties and seventies which witnessed improvised builders paying little attention to architectural, technical and

<sup>3</sup> The case of the 1980 earthquake was analysed by Anna Maria Zaccaria, through a field-work and a campaign of interviews conducted in 23 municipalities of the crater between 2010 and 2014. A more complete presentation of the outcomes of the research can be found in: Zaccaria A. M. (2015). The interviews, many of which are in audio/video format, are kept at the Archivio Multimediale della Memoria ([www.memoriedalterritorio.it](http://www.memoriedalterritorio.it)) created at the Department of Social Science - University of Naples Federico II.

urban planning rules; the frenzy for new buildings diverted attention from maintenance of the old ones in brickwork. They recount the inadequate seismic classification of the areas, all with a long history of disastrous earthquakes. An unhappy combination of factors which inhibited structural resilience of the territories, both in the small municipalities of the hinterland and in the bigger, more urbanized ones. The Mayor of Balvano (PZ) at the time, Ezio Di Carlo, recalls that most of the 810 houses were converted caverns, old and stuck one on top of the other; 30% of them collapsed on 23<sup>rd</sup> November. Amalia Leo, who was at the time surveying the architectural heritage of the city, recalls that Avellino was completely: «torn (...) and the older people spoke of a worse destruction than that caused by war bombing in 1943».

Thirty years later, on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2009 at 3.32 at night, an earthquake of magnitude 6.3 hit the heart of Abruzzo<sup>4</sup>. While the 1980 earthquake was unexpected, the shake of the 6<sup>th</sup> April was the most violent of a series of tremors which had started in 2008, confirming the “seismic style” of the area. In this case the lack of “seismic memory” combined with the structural vulnerability of the territory amplified the damage. The area of the crater involved 57 municipalities between the provinces of L’Aquila, Teramo and Pescara. There were 309 casualties, of which 220 only in the city of L’Aquila, where the “Casa dello studente” (student house) collapsed, killing 8 students. The historical centre of L’Aquila was immediately declared unsuitable for use: more than 60.000 buildings were damaged, of which 18.000 become no anymore accessible to households (Fois, Forino, 2014). The damage to the city’s cultural heritage was inestimable. Onna, the eastern suburb of L’Aquila, counted 40 victims and was completely destroyed: «I got a phone call from somebody I never managed to recognise, telling me “Mayor, Onna doesn’t exist anymore “and he hung up» recalls the Mayor of L’Aquila, Massimo Cialente. Overall, there were 1.500 injured, 80.000 evacuated, about 30.000 homeless (Liel *et al.*, 2013). On a socio-economic point of view, in the twenty years before the earthquake minor centres<sup>5</sup> in the crater were marked by an average population loss of 5% and by an economy mainly based on the primary sector, with a remarkable

<sup>4</sup> The case of the 2009 earthquake is being analysed by Sara Zizzari. The research work started in 2013 and has gone on through several visits and participant observation. To date 40 interviews to L’Aquila citizens have been gathered. The interviews to the Mayors of the crater of L’Aquila have been carried out by Anna Maria Zaccaria ([www.memoriedalterritorio.it](http://www.memoriedalterritorio.it)).

<sup>5</sup> The municipalities that we studied are: Acciano, Barisciano, Fossa, Sant’Eusanio Forconese, Villa Sant’Angelo and Tornimparte.

farming traditional activities (Clementi, Piroddi, 1988). In the seventies, with the tertiary sector building up, the centre of L'Aquila spreads in new neighbourhoods around the walls; urban economy was fuelled by a vital commercial and touristic activity. In the ten years before the 2009 earthquake, the population of L'Aquila grew steadily, probably because of the inurbanization opposite to the emptying of municipalities and suburbs around the city. The historical centre represented a "total" place, where work time and free time mixed up in the daily life of residents or those who lived the city. It was the functional barycentre of the city. Local institutions headquarters, public services, commercial activities and professional studios, the weekly market were all concentrated within the area of the historical centre. This is the space where primary and secondary functions mixed up spontaneously (Jacobs, 1961) instilling in the city a spirit of safeness. The earthquake altered violently this socially and historically established equilibrium, destroying the historical centre. Though distant thirty years from each other and therefore with different historical scenarios, the dynamics of these two catastrophes present elements of continuity and discontinuity which we will try to analyse with a focus on resilience. We will examine the phase coming immediately after the earthquake, covering the moment of the first "response" to the impact and the following one, the "recovery" (Drabek, 1986). In this phase the shocking event cancels the space/time coordinates, reveals the response skills of local social groups, amplifying their visibility.

### **3. The Mayors at the time of the earthquake**

Immediately after the earthquake, local administrators were invested by "exceptional" responsibilities, powers and autonomy which they had to turn into emergency management, often in great solitude: «I remember, after the phone calls about the technical decisions (...) I had two hours of great solitude. I felt completely alone!» recalls the Mayor of L'Aquila, thinking back of the moment when he decided to declare all the historical centre unfit for use. Both in 1980 and in 2009 no Mayor was on duty when the earthquake occurred, since it happened on a Sunday in both cases. Everywhere the first response was personal: save oneself and one's own family. The Mayor of L'Aquila sheltered his family in the camping van parked near the house, to drive it to an outdoor area; the Mayor of Avellino, who was strolling along the main street, started searching the way home amongst the yellow dust cloud of collapsing buildings. But they recovered their roles and institu-

tional functions at once, fulfilling the need for a new individual and collective identity after the earthquake had broken the network of connections and mutual recognition. They use resources from their personal network which were available there and then. Together with their friends and relatives they dug ruins and offered first aid. In 1980 the Mayor of Conza della Campania (AV), which was completely destroyed, contacted immediately the *Carabinieri* of the near municipality, with whom he had kept a good relation thanks to a period of service in same corps. In 2009 the Mayor of Sant' Eusanio Forconese (AQ) was counting «those I met in the street and those who I knew had problems getting out of their homes, old people in particular. With other citizens we went where people were trapped in their houses, trying to give a hand as we could». Both in 1980 and 2009 local administrators took on a central role in the poor but effective network of relations which was taking shape in the first few hours after the earthquake. They activated their social capital resources, put back together what was left of the relational network of the communities, used their administrative and professional expertise<sup>6</sup>. They retrieved anything that could give back a meaning to their function, cancelled by local councils and committees thrown into disorder, collapsed institutional seats, territories without any administrative features left. Many remember the first, precarious meetings of the local council: «there were 12 or 13 of us left and started using the farming consortium for our daily evening meetings» (Mayor of Lioni-AV); «only four or five of us were governing the town, the local council had disappeared (...) in a kindergarten, at the children's desks we took on our responsibilities» recalls the Mayor of L'Aquila. In general, with a distance of thirty years and in different territories, both in the province capital city and in the smaller municipalities, Mayors appeared autonomous in their governance of the territory, oriented towards an ethic of responsibility and mitigation of damage.

When external actors appeared on the scene, dynamics became different in space and time. The location, the distance from the political center, the reachability of the earthquake-affected areas are some of the main elements that mark the differences. These elements are interwoven with the social fabric on which the earthquake impacts and with the state's intervention style, creating different paths of community resilience. The crater of 1980

<sup>6</sup> In 1980 the Mayor of Balvano (PZ), Di Carlo, was also a doctor: «I dug wherever I could hear moaning, until four a.m. All the dead bodies on one side and the injured, stacked on a lorry, were sent to the hospital in Potenza. Then I had to respect the wishes of relatives crying for their beloved ones, shaking them desperately. I had to send people to the hospital even if I knew they were dead!».

covers a wide area, geographically distant from the political “center” and difficult to be reached because of the already poor infrastructures, also severely damaged by the earthquake. Small municipalities have a cohesive social fabric, in which the conflict is controlled in strong ties of kinship and neighborhood. The Mayor represents the institutional and political most immediate reference, the bridge with the central government, even when belonging to a different political party. The relationship between the Mayor and citizens have a direct and often a personal nature. Here, after the seismic shock the Mayors continued to be central nodes of a network which grew through the connections with external actors coming from everywhere to support the recovery. These were mainly volunteers in the first days. As we will see later, citizens too were part of this resilient networks, as individuals or organized groups. The State arrived later, with a “light” intervention and leaving a broad power to local administrators in the *recovery* phase. The coordination role of the extraordinary commissioner Zamberletti was supported by the operational cohesion of local administrators, and their availability to negotiation. They established regular contacts with the commissioner, but especially between them, exchanging information, tools, expertises and experiences. The Mayor of Salza Irpina (AV) was very familiar with bureaucracy and helped other Mayors asking for advice; after an agreement with *Marina Militare* and with the help of volunteers, the Mayor of Muro Lucano (PZ) created a field hospital which was also used by the near municipalities. In general, this cohesive action of local administrators fostered *familiarity* of external actors with local communities. Many bonds created with institutional actors and technicians not belonging to the local communities continued, and acquired also an expressive value over time. The Mayor of Calabritto (AV) still keeps pictures of the volunteers from the province of Milan, together with the memory of their profound friendships; two technicians from the province of Trento became godfathers to the sons of the Mayor of Balvano (PZ) and there were many who stayed in the town for a long time. These dynamics, although with different intensity, crossed the whole area of the crater, generating resources of structural and dynamic resilience. Avellino, capital city of the province and seat of the Prefecture, was partially involved in this dynamics. It became the crucial point of the technical and institutional network managing the crisis and for this reason the local govern was incorporated in an intermediate level of government, hindering its autonomy and resilience resources.

In the crater of 2009 the *recovery* phase overlapped with the *response* phase. The area affected by the earthquake is relatively circumscribed, it is accessible and not far from the political “center”. Especially, the epicenter

coincides with the provincial capital: an average city with a remarkable artistic heritage. External actors arrived a few hours after the shocking event, among them the *Protezione Civile* took on a fundamental role. The “heavy” intervention of the State marginalized the local government and inhibited the Community’s resilience. In this scenario the small municipalities developed different dynamics compared to the capital city of the province, somewhat similar to those of the 1980 earthquake, even though at a more hectic pace. Mayors kept autonomy and control of the territory; they put at stake their abilities and capabilities, they were central in the organisational networks, and negotiated resources between them and with external actors. In Villa Sant’Angelo «the *Carabinieri* arrived while it was still night, not even after an hour (from the earthquake). On 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> April the tent city had already been mounted, we were already surveying the buildings, meetings with Mayors had already taken place, we had already gone to talk with *Di.Comac*<sup>7</sup>». The relations with *Protezione Civile* were overall positive, even though its complex organisational apparatus did not produce the same effects everywhere: «in this municipality (Acciano) we, as local administrators, have always managed the civil protection service. The real volunteers from 6<sup>th</sup> April 2009 till today were and remain the members of the municipal administration»; in Sant’ Eusanio Forconese: «aids started instantaneously. Of course it is a rather laborious procedure. I must say we were really lucky with the groups sent by *Protezione Civile* who mounted the tent city in the blink of an eye!». Relations of solidarity and cohesion took shape also with the volunteers arriving from other regions of Italy, but their brief stay in this area made them weak ties, with an instrumental rather than expressive function: «The relationship between the volunteers from Piemonte and the citizens of Barisciano still persists. But the meetings are fewer and fewer». In these small municipalities the recovery phase seemed to be basically managed within the local communities, with low levels of conflict, in a relatively short time and with resilience strategies aimed at recovering the same *normality* as before the earthquake. The situation in L’Aquila was very different. The enormous extent of the damage, the spectacularization of the disaster and of the “restoring” action of central government and *Protezione civile* (Bulsei, 2010), who became the leading characters on the scene, left little space for resilience. Generally speaking, in both cases we examined the *institutionalization* of disaster seemed to hinder the processes of resilience started soon after the earthquake, creating conflictual relations at various levels and increasing continuities and

<sup>7</sup> Direzione Centro Operativo di Comando e Controllo, organ of *Protezione Civile*.

breaks. We have seen that in 1980 the town of Avellino, incorporated in an intermediate level of government, lost a great deal of autonomy a few weeks after the earthquake. The arrival of the head of the Berlusconi government at the time and of *Protezione Civile* at L'Aquila expropriated local administrators of their role in crisis management. In the municipalities of the 1980 crater the institutionalization of the earthquake was formalised by the ratification, in the Spring of 1981, of Law 219 which funded the reconstruction: the definition of the urban reconstruction plans involved different interests and visions obstaculating the autonomy of local institutions and communities. The controversial fronts enacted by this process shared a pivotal question: to rebuild as it was and where it was, or somewhere else, maybe complying with the myth of modernity? The Mayor of L'Aquila was strongly against the idea of transferring outside the city public offices, hospitals, universities, as well as their staff. This plan added on the building of the *new town* would have ratified "the death of the town": «I myself started making phone calls to find available industrial warehouses, or any building which was still standing, to host these structures!». In 1980 at Sant'Angelo dei Lombardi (AV) Rosanna Repole<sup>8</sup> led a group of citizens to stop military lorries who had come to execute the transferring of the local seat of the Court, which was heavily damaged by the earthquake. In these *spaces* of institutional resilience, the recovery of *normality* occurs with the restoring of the places, their meanings, the symbolic and identitarian function of institutional districts.

#### 4. People, homes, perspectives

The earthquake in 1980 suddenly upset the daily routine, that one of the 2009 disturbed it for a long. In the first case, population immediately run outside, as in 1962 and in 1930. Many people reminded that. The earthquake in 2009 came after two strong shakes which exasperated the anxiety which had already started with an earthquake swarm in December 2008. We will focus on L'Aquila, where some people decided to spend the night outside, others went out at first and then decided to return home; some others joined to their neighbours sharing the fear. Many remained at home, even if with some precautions. Ms. Vanna, for example, put the overcoats near the bed and gathered in a bag the mobile phone, some gold things,

<sup>8</sup> She was only female Mayor in the seismic area of '80, designated at the night of November 23<sup>rd</sup>, after the death under the rubble of the Mayor on duty.

documents, money; her husband, who usually slept without pyjamas, decided to put one on that night. This range of different behaviours shows the uncertainty felt by people from L'Aquila before the disaster, since the experts of *Commissione Grandi Rischi* arrived in the town on 31<sup>st</sup> March. They had reassured them that the earthquake swarm did not announce a big shake, but allowed energy to run out. Actually, the seismic history of Abruzzo told a totally different story (Guidoboni, 2015) and people from Abruzzo knew it. Nevertheless, Antonello Ciccozzi (2013: 23) stresses, talking about his personal experience, that for many people the opinion of those authoritative scientists: «became the predominant judgment, a sort of vision because of my rational side considered exaggerate and embarrassing to interpret those shakes as signs of an imminent danger». The *word of science* divided population: those who trusted institutions and the infallibility of science stayed at home; those who preferred to trust memory and traditional practices came outside; the undecided, torn between rationality and tradition, fell into *cognitive dissonance* (Festinger, 1997) and got stuck. The reassuring opinion of experts was actually based on a wrong interpretation of the “phishing signs” and showed their poor familiarity with the places and their seismic history. In such dynamic memory is delegitimized as a source of resilience, and structural and social vulnerability grow. When the “rumble” exploded many citizens of L'Aquila were at home and did not manage to get out. The survivors remember: «the ceiling was forming waves. Five more seconds and we'd be dead, the building was suffering too much» (Gaetano D.); «the noise of a house breaking up is incredible!» (Piera G.). In the crater of 1980, like at L'Aquila, as soon the shock was overcome, people started looking for their family, friends and relatives. Those left unharmed by the shock started digging bare-handed among the ruins, gave first aid to victims, gathered things. The scene at the break of dawn gave an idea of the extent of the disaster. The earthquake cancelled the geography and history of the places. These places, and above all the built areas, are those where daily routines took shape, identitarian elements and social stratifications are materialized. The earthquake lost any meaning. Tony Lucido, manager of a local radio station at Sant'Angelo dei Lombardi in 1980, recalls: «There was the building symbol of the town modernity, erected at the beginning of the sixties, Palazzo Japicca (...) leaving in there meant a rise in the social status, there was a lift. That building wasn't there anymore. I saw the moon instead of the building. It was horrible!». For the citizens of L'Aquila it was a total loss of their own town: «I go back to town now, but I have no town» (Nadia C.); with this loss, orientation and safety are lost «the centre of L'Aquila was an immense park where you

could do whatever you wanted because nothing could harm you. There were porticoes where you could walk. L'Aquila meant protection, tranquility and safety» (Leontina V.). The sense of belonging to the historical centre was so strong to encompass anybody you met there: there were no strangers in those streets (Nadia C.). The red cloud rising that night, which everybody saw from miles away, meant the collapse of the whole historical centre.

In 1980 citizens of the damaged municipalities managed to keep control of what was left of the places, both in the phases of response and recovery. The desperate solitude of the days immediately after the seism triggered individual and collective resilience strategies. In Sant'Angelo dei Lombardi, Angelo Frieri, young medical doctor, took the first car he found to go to the hospital pharmacy and get medicines. Especially the young ones, felt "protagonists" of the recovery, in a climate which could become confrontational at times: «together with many other people (...) reanimating your dead town, shaking off it, and you felt useful» (Tony Lucido, Sant'Angelo dei Lombardi). In many municipalities of Irpinia, in particular, citizens got organised in committees to exchange ideas about choices and decisions, between them and with local administrators (Ventura, 2103; Zaccaria, 2015). In such a context, committees performed an important role in the recovery of the social fabric and the trial of early practices of *deliberative democracy* (Pellizzoni, 2005). Everywhere emergency shelters were set just near ruins and people could walk to the remains of their homes. There was never a complete break with the residential area. The prospect of going back to one's own home, which was never turned down in the immediate post-seism and fostered by the huge funds for reconstruction, supported resilient behaviours. School classes were resumed as soon as possible, practically in the open air. Life in a van and prefabricated buildings created new neighbourhood networks of expressive connections and long-lasting support. Local independent radio stations were reactivated in a short time to make communication easier. Local daily papers were published «to let people know what had happened, to remember» (Cesare D'Andrea, Sant'Angelo dei Lombardi). In Balvano, in 1981, many young couples got married and birth rate increased: a resilient response to the death, under the ruins of the mother-church, of 41 very young lives, almost a whole generation cancelled. Moreover, in Balvano as in other places, in the first few months after the seism some little shops opened, to meet the needs of all those who had come to give help, using the surplus of goods arrived in aid. This "economic resilience" was also at the basis of the many cooperatives arising in the earthquake area in the early months of 1981 (Ventura, 2013). Coopera-

tives mobilised economic, organisational and social resources, opening up local contexts to an outlook of modernisation and development. Nevertheless, except in rare cases, they did not last for long, especially because they were overlooked by public funding; Law 219 did not fund cooperatives directly (*ib.*). A case of institutional short-sightedness?

The historical centre of L'Aquila became *red zone*. The *Protezione Civile* was very efficient in setting up the tent city where most of the population found shelter, losing at once any physical contact with the town. The first appreciated prompt intervention of *Protezione Civile* soon became over control and passivation of the population (Musmeci, 2015). «We had to move around carrying several cards, for transport, to enter the tent city. There were only uniforms everywhere, there were only militaries» (Ornella C.). 35.690 evacuated people chose to settle in the 179 tent cities set up around the town rather than move to the hotels around the coast, to stay near their homes. Imposed and limited spaces, “stranger” neighbourhoods, denial of intimacy and pervasive control by volunteers and *Protezione Civile* to avoid disorders, generated deep discomfort in the tent city of L'Aquila. The social cohesion caused by sharing the same drama, turned into intolerance and violence on several occasions (Zizzari, 2015). Separation from places and homes prevented citizens from becoming protagonists. After about four months tent cities started being dismantled and many families were transferred to the new semi-permanent homes of the C.A.S.E.<sup>9</sup> project, a *new town* complex around the capital city of the province. Nimis (2009) underlines how the project started with strong ambiguity as regards its duration: accommodations which were meant to be durable but at the same time temporary. Living in the C.A.S.E. brought citizens of L'Aquila back to the same dissonance which anguished them before the “rumble”, suspended in the vagueness of prospects. The home is the place where the spaces are at the same time intimate and shared, subject to economic and nursing investments, pregnant with meaning and family histories: those accommodations could never be called “C.A.S.E.” and anyhow they were never perceived as such. Moreover, this new “temporary” arrangement of the built and social space, become almost definitive. Suspended in time and space, disoriented by the loss of material and social points of reference<sup>10</sup>, people from L'Aquila did not manage to express significant forms of dynamic resilience. The passage from tents to C.A.S.E. was initially felt as a

<sup>9</sup> Complessi Antisismici Sostenibili Ecompatibili. Only one area is in the town centre, while the other ones are up to 30 Km away from it.

<sup>10</sup> «Even street signs are dead, replaced by the burgundy signs of Protezione Civile indicating (...) the temporary camps. A town of just acronyms!» (Ornella C.).

relief, but once physical fatigue was over, discomfort took its place: «At the beginning I was happy. My God, how wonderful, I have a home! anything would do for me, anyway I had nothing. Later, in the C.A.S.E. project we were so-so; we didn't know anyone. I felt a bit ill. But it was... I don't know, well we missed our home a bit» (Giusi V.). The combination between the small spaces in the houses and the great distance between blocks killed relations. Old people could not gather at home, nor visit each other frequently; the younger ones felt the lack of autonomy and privacy; parents prevented their children from playing outside the C.A.S.E. because it was not safe enough, without a neighbourhood network exercising social control. The crushing of the local community, triggered by the earthquake, shows itself in the citizens' everyday life. In general, both for women and men, this accommodation was the denial of domestic life and daily routine: «Before (the earthquake) I was sure I would meet somebody sooner or later, which was good. From C.A.S.E. you had to phone somebody and take an appointment, then you had to take your car ... but it wasn't the same thing also because where could you go? Downtown? To do what? *Out within the Progetto*: let's not talk about it, please! How disgusting! In the end I shut myself up at home. Home? That wasn't even my home!» (Mauro S.). The loss of home and domestic life was even more traumatic for women. Many of them lived in suspension of the usual daily routine, which they kept postponing to the - indeterminate - moment when they would go back to "their own" home: «Me? At the C.A.S.E. I felt I was not breathing. No, actually I decided to hold breath; I was waiting, I was only temporarily there. I was waiting for better times, never come (...) and that's how it's going to be forever at this point» (Giusi V.). The fracture between feeling a place and the present built environment caused an identity crisis; inhabitants and places shared the same state of alienation (La Cecla, 1993). The words of Barbara V. become emblematic: «I don't even have my iron. I've got one here, but what do I do with it? Who cares anyway even if I go out with a wrinkled sweater!»

Resilience found limited space in this situation. The entity of the damage, the separation from town and home, the degradation of the social networks made the recovery of "normality" not too credible, at least in a short term. The uncertainty of prospects, perceived as regulated "from the external actors", gave weak motivations to re-build a future. Many teachers resumed classes as soon as possible, recreating classes as they were before the seism; even those teachers who were living in the hotels on the Adriatic coast chose to "restart" at L'Aquila with their own students, despite the long hours of commuting this would entail every day. For what concerns

collective action, many committees of citizens were established, a promoting initiatives of “opposition” to the central government, rather than horizontal cooperation. The most significant initiative was the “protest of the wheelbarrows”: in February 2010 about 6.000 protesters entered the historical centre and started loading their wheelbarrows with ruins of the collapsed buildings. The protest generated other civic initiatives, suggesting possible scenarios of participative democracy. But conflicting atmosphere still remained. The whole post-seismic scene at L’Aquila was controversial: while citizens expressed their dissent for the way emergency was being managed, media celebrated the work of *Protezione Civile* and the government. The citizen’s protest was crushed by media, movements were labelled as derivations of parties and/or local political leaders, active citizenship was dismissed (Calandra, 2012).

### **Final remarks**

Studying disasters with a “territorialist approach” can be useful for different reasons. Shock events, as it was noted, reveal the structural and social characteristics of local contexts, their latent conflicts and reorganization dynamics, their relationship with the politic “center”. Comparing the earthquakes that hit Italy in 1980 and 2009 allows us to propose some reflections on this topic. In the first place, the comparison provides empirical evidence that falsifies the idea of a unique pattern of response of local communities to disasters. This idea is based mainly on stereotyped and homologating readings on the local contexts and it is supported by a public representation - largely influenced by the media - “totalizing” the events. Moreover, very often this representation has highlighted negative elements (helplessness, disorganization, corruption, lack of civic consciousness, etc.), homologated territories, and local practices in the frame of an extreme vulnerability. On the contrary, this study highlighted a heterogeneous framework of experiences in terms of resilience, even within the same seismic crater. In the area affected by the 1980 earthquake the local communities revealed the ability of an immediate response to the disaster; a certain dynamism of the social fabric (even economic) after the resettlement of affected populations, as well as, an administrative dynamism which involves new skills and styles of local government. After the seismic shock the Mayors remained central nodes of a resilient network which grew through the connections with external actors coming to support the recovery. Citizens too were part of this resilient network, as individuals or orga-

nized groups. However, Avellino, capital city of the province and seat of the Prefecture, lost a great deal of autonomy a few weeks after the earthquake, when became the crucial point of the technical and institutional network managing the crisis. In the crater of 2009 the *recovery* phase overlapped with the *response* phase. A few hours after the shocking event, the *Protezione Civile* took on a fundamental role in post-disaster reorganization. The “heavy” intervention of the State marginalized the local government and inhibited the Community’s resilience. In this scenario the small municipalities developed different dynamics compared to the capital city of the province, somewhat similar to those of the 1980 earthquake, even though at a more hectic pace. Mayors kept autonomy and control of the territory; they put at stake their abilities and capabilities, they were central in the organisational networks, and negotiated resources between them and with external actors. In L’Aquila the local community appeared “stunned”, waiting for the events, unable to develop “therapeutic” strategies of resilience. The Mayor of the city came into direct conflict with the central government; social vulnerability has fueled beyond the damage itself. In practice, the differences of scale seem to favour the small municipalities compared with the cities, which are affected to a greater extent to a “democracy lack” produced by the institutionalization of the catastrophe.

In the second place, both case-studies reveal the importance of some territorial elements in determining the adaptive performances to post-seismic emergency; they overall reveal the centrality of the space-time dimensions. In terms of space, the most crucial elements identified are: the extension of the seismic crater, the geophysical characteristics of the affected territories and their reachability; geographical distance from the political “center”. In terms of time, they are: the “historical” time in which the event occurs, the time that the first external aids employ to arrive, the *latency* time of the State’s answer and the duration of the condition of “exceptionality” (Schmitt 1998). The latter is understood as the primacy of the decision on the norm, to foster a more immediate recovery action. As we have seen, the crater of 1980 covered a wide inner area, geographically distant from the political “center”, marked by a weakness of the infrastructures, also severely damaged by the earthquake. Also communication networks in this area were particularly weak, even in relation to the standard of the time: the first, uncertain alarm was launched in the ether by a radio-amateur. The first volunteers reached the crater on the day after the earthquake. The State came much later; the extraordinary commissioner Zamberletti promoted a “light” intervention in the *recovery* phase, favoring the condition of “exceptionality” (also validated by Law 219/81 which assigned the management

of reconstruction funds to local municipalities). The area affected by the earthquake in 2009 was relatively circumscribed, it is accessible and not far from the political “center”. Especially, the epicenter coincides with the provincial capital: an average city with a remarkable artistic heritage. The communication networks are highly specialized now: the news of the seismic event spreads while it happens. As we have seen, first aids arrive immediately and are coordinated by the *Protezione civile*. The State expresses a “heavy” intervention hindering the autonomy of local institutions and communities, overall in the region’s capital city, L’Aquila. All these elements interact with the social complexity of local contexts in generating different resilience performances.

We can draw some general conclusions from these experiences of disasters. Firstly, they show that the *resilience* should be understood as a situational and dynamic concept. It can develop on different bases in different contexts and have different ways and intensities depending on the *setting*. Secondly, it is evident that resilience needs space, time and goals to be enacted. In any case, the practices of community resilience are an important field of local governance experimentation; for this reason, resilience should be set as a policy goal. In a model of *Protezione Civile* based on devolution, it seems a precondition for the autonomy of local governments in crisis management. Knowing the territories, develop administrative skills to manage the emergency, put the “risk mitigation” as an issue of decision making emerges as inevitable steps of this path. What is more, citizens’ awareness of risk appears as a necessary aspect to achieve this goal. In this perspective, the individual and collective memory emerges as a crucial source of resilience, as tool of self-defense and also of prevention. Finally, this study highlights that the local individual and collective memory is a particularly effective source for “catching” the social dimension of risk, vulnerability and resilience. Furthermore, this study reveals the opportunity to focus on the first phase of post-disaster emergency, still little considered in previous research. This provides a privileged angle of view for grasping the potential resilience of local communities. What happens in the emergency phase tends to orient the course of the subsequent recovery and reconstruction phases.

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